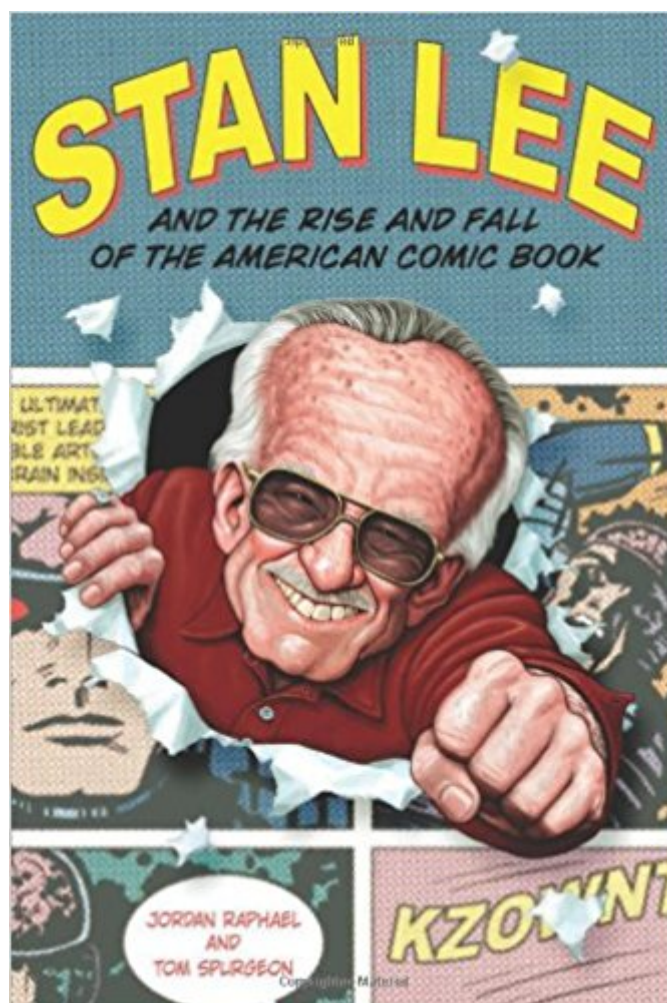


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Stan Lee And The Rise And Fall Of The American Comic Book



Synopsis

Based on interviews with Stan Lee and dozens of his colleagues and contemporaries, as well as extensive archival research, this book provides a professional history, an appreciation, and a critical exploration of the face of Marvel Comics. Recognized as a dazzling writer, a skilled editor, a relentless self-promoter, a credit hog, and a huckster, Stan Lee rose from his humble beginnings to ride the wave of the 1940s comic books boom and witness the current motion picture madness and comic industry woes. Included is a complete examination of the rise of Marvel Comics, Lee's work in the years of postwar prosperity, and his efforts in the 1960s to revitalize the medium after it had grown stale.

Book Information

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Customer Reviews

Stan Lee, the cocreator of pop cultural icons like Spider-Man, the Hulk and the X-Men, has long been the subject of debate within the comics community, and Raphael and Spurgeon aim to set the record straight in this well-researched and entertaining book. In the late 1960s, Lee elevated himself into the public eye as the face of Marvel Comics, adopting a colorful persona along the way. Left behind were his c-creators, artists Jack Kirby and Steve Ditko, who never received the credit they deserved. At age 17, in 19TK, Lee (n‚ Stanley Lieber) took a job as an all-purpose assistant at his cousin Martin Goodman's comic book company, Timely. A frustrated novelist, Lee remained at Timely, shielded by Goodman from the industry's mid-century tumults, and eventually he transformed the company into Marvel Comics, steering it and himself into pop culture history. The

authors portray Lee as a constantly enthusiastic, slightly daffy figure who turned a Depression-era work ethic and real bursts of creativity into something special. For all of his faults, the authors give Lee proper credit for being a fast and exciting creator who gave superheroes real-world problems and anxieties and used this realism for its maximum potential. Raphael and Spurgeon also chronicle Lee's decades in the wilderness of Hollywood, trying and failing to get decent films made from Marvel properties. Writer Raphael and cartoonist Spurgeon have put together a solid narrative well interwoven with the history of comics. As they demonstrate well, Lee's story is the story of mainstream comic books and one that is important reading. 12 pages of b&w photos not seen by PW. Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

Adult/High School-Raphael and Spurgeon march readers through Lee's first 80 years, taking many compelling byroads along the way to observe the history of American comic-book development, distribution, and readership. Lee created a dynamic and somewhat charismatic persona for himself early in life, and was able to move from technical grunt work to a certain level of co-creativity with more sophisticated artists, and from errand boy to publisher to media mogul. He is, indeed, a part of popular culture with high name recognition. The authors use a variety of resources, including interviews with field specialists and unpublished writings, to substantiate their views of both the man and the medium's evolution. While there are source notes for each chapter, they appear in alphabetical order, making it impossible to find the specific reference to which some controversial declarations are attributed. This will frustrate those doing higher-level research but won't impede casual readers' enjoyment of a colorful man's story told through well-described vignettes. Franciska Goldsmith, Berkeley Public Library, CA Copyright 2003 Reed Business Information, Inc. --This text refers to the Hardcover edition.

In comicdom, there are a few creators (Stan Lee, Jim Shooter, various editors at DC Comics, et al) who are seen as bad guys for one reason or another. Here we have what I think is a balanced account of Stan Lee, who has been seen as everything as a genius to a thief to a visionary to a hack. Did Stan lie about his creator status of the Marvel Universe. Yes. Did he overstate his role in the creation of Spider-Man, the Fantastic Four, Iron Man, Doctor Doom, etc.? Yes, and he has sometimes stated as much (with an uncomfortable squirm, I bet). Is he a bad guy for doing so? Well...if honest is the best policy, Stan is one for bad policies, I guess. Love him or hate him, he IS one of the great figures in comic books and it is easily argued that without Stan Lee's contributions, comic books would not have been the social force and just plain fun that they were in the 1960's

and certainly Marvel would not be, to this day, on top of the heap of comic book companies. This book is well-written and holds back only in the slightest. Stan gets the black eye he deserves. But he also gets the pat on the back he deserves, too. I'll now go on to read his own "Excelsior" with one eye on this book to remind me of the hype that Stan is famous for pulling. This is a fast read and very entertaining. It offers super pictures (which Ronin Ro's biography of Jack Kirby sadly lacks) of Stan at various stages of his life. ALL Marvel fans and fans of the Silver Age of comics should read it! Nuff Said!

Factually this jives with the other books about Marvel's history (except the ones written by Stan himself). A great bit of nostalgia mixed in with some myth-busting revelations. Nothing terribly new here, but a poignant and bittersweet summary of Stan Lee's career up to about 2003-2004.

I chose this rating because it is a great book! It helped on a report on him for my school

As the review's title says, this is a quick and effectively concise look at Stan Lee and Marvel comics. The book moves quickly through Stan's early biography, slows down through the years leading up to Marvel, then takes its time with a detailed look at his work in the Marvel Universe. One of the strengths of the book is that it doesn't do all of this in a vacuum; it also takes some space to fill in some of the context. It does a good job with some backhistory of comics in general, with DC comics, and with the social/legislative response to comic books during the time they were regarded as a "threat to our youth". The authors fill in the context skillfully and quickly, giving you enough information for a more full picture of what was happening and why at Marvel but without bogging the main story down in digressions. The main story is the growth and decline and regrowth of Marvel as seen through the lens of Stan Lee's career and if not covered in exhaustive detail, it certainly is covered in enough for all but the most obsessive of fans I would guess. While Lee is the obvious focus, the authors also spend, as they should, quite a lot of space on the two main artists of Marvel's glory years--Kirby and Ditko, placing their work in a wider context than just their time at Marvel. And while clearly fans of all three men, the authors, rather than act as fawning bio artists, reveal their flaws (both professional and personal) as well as their qualities, as well as going into some of the more ugly aspects of their working (or not working as the case may be) relationships. The "origin" stories of many of the classic comics are here, with some fair warning to the reader that the origins are more mysterious than previous tellings would relate. And the authors do a good job of conveying the actual creating/writing/publishing process, giving the reader a true feel for the work

on a personal level rather than in dry, encyclopedic terms. One gets a true feel for the hectic nature of the work, the rewards and the frustrations. I have only a few complaints. In discussing such a visual craft, there are far too few actual visuals in the book. Especially in discussing the work of Kirby and Ditko--the vivid descriptions of their own drawing as well as the comparisons to other contemporary or earlier artists--the text cries out for some visual support. And the book is a bit skimpy on more recent history with regard to Marvel and the movies, though that could be defended on the grounds that as the book states, Stan Lee had become a peripheral figure by then and so the shift into film is somewhat off the book's focus. And finally, as a long-time fan of comics, I could have used more on the stories themselves though obviously the authors were aiming at conciseness here and to be honest, I probably would have said the same thing had they another 50 or more pages on the stories. Overall it's a quick, well-researched book that conveys the necessary facts but even better the interesting stories and the even more interesting personalities involved. Highly recommended.

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